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ABSTRACT

This paper offers an introduction to microteaching and how it would be used in the Associate Instructor Teachers Skills Program (AITSP). The first section deals with the basic phases of microteaching: a) modeling, b) feedback, and c) practice. The second section explains the three approaches used in the AITSP teaching practicum: a) Stanford Approach--useful for gathering research data; b) Affective-Emotional Approach--useful for the development of interpersonal relations; and c) Role Playing Approach--useful in teacher training. The last section delineates the following teaching skills, which have been cultivated in microteaching settings: a) stimulus variation, b) lecturing, c) inquiry training, and d) interpersonal communication skills. Seven references are included. (Author/BRB)

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An Introduction to Microteaching for the Associate Instructor Teaching Skills Program

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Introduction to Microteaching

A major component of the Associate Instructor Teaching Skills Program (AITSP) is the teaching practicum. The three-fold purpose of the practicum phase is to provide an opportunity for Associate Instructors (A.I.'s) to (1) further develop a comfortable teaching style in a low risk situation; (2) increase their repertoire of classroom teaching skills; and (3) facilitate experimentation in new ways of instructing. Microteaching is a small group practice training procedure that utilizes video tape analysis and guided feed back to the learner (AI trainees). This medium will be used as the vehicle for reaching the goals of the AITSP teaching practicum.

Specifically, microteaching is a situation where a teacher (trainee) teaches to a small (4-8) group of students (micropupils) for a short period of time (5-10 minutes). During the microteaching session the trainee works intensively on a specific skill of teaching, e.g., how to increase pupil discussion by asking particular types of questions. The actual microteaching procedure can emphasize many techniques and conditions. Should the teacher choose to practice skills of lecturing, for example, pupils are desirable, but optional. Or, if a teacher wishes to increase interpersonal skills, the traditional teacher-pupil lecture environment may not be appropriate; but rather a small group discussion setting will be desirable. Further, it could also be that the teacher may want to

develop skills to maintain student interest during discussions. In this case the microteaching session should simulate actual behaviors such as boredom on the parts of pupils.

Hence, microteaching can be used for a variety of purposes and in different ways. However, there are three phases of microteaching that are common to all microteaching sessions: modeling, practice, and feedback. These three phases, or components, will be incorporated into all microteaching sessions that will be developed for the AITSP. A further condition, the specification of predefined skills, although not a phase of microteaching will be a requirement to insure the microteaching sessions reflect the needs of the particular department groups for whom the sessions are being designed. It is necessary to predefine skills because of the multi-disciplinary (skill) nature of teaching. Teaching is a complex task. Since it incorporates many skills to be used in different settings at different times, an effort needs to be made to focus the microteaching sessions. Some of these specific skills will be learned one at a time using the three phases, modeling, practice, and feedback in the microteaching setting.

The Modeling Phase. This phase consists of the trainee interpreting a written description of a particular skill. In addition, the trainee views a model video tape of someone using the particular skill in a classroom setting. A number of different models can be presented this way and discussions of the skill on the model tapes with the teaching practicum supervisor completes the modeling phase.

The Practice Phase. The second phase, practice, follows modeling. During this phase the trainee teaches his lesson to a small group of micropupils. The trainee is asked to concentrate only on the particular skill in question. Practice can extend for a long period of time as in the case of lecturing or for only a few minutes as would be the case for some questioning skills. This phase of the microteaching is monitored by video tape.

The Feedback Phase. During the third phase, feedback, the supervisor discusses the lesson with the trainee. The focus is on helping the trainee to understand how and when to use the skill in question. Feedback to the trainee can also come from the micropupils who were a part of the lesson. Finally, the video tape of the microteaching session is presented for the trainee to view his own behavior in teaching. In this way, the trainee is able to identify those behaviors he may have been unaware of but would like to change or stress. (One of the authors remembers one of his first microteaching experiences after which the supervisor suggested he "should take his hands out of his pockets." After denying that he taught completely without the benefit of gesture, he viewed the video tape of his presentation to find his hands were in his pockets the entire time!)

However useful microteaching may seem, it does have its limitations. The most frequent criticism is that microteaching is too artificial. While this may be true to some extent it is argued here that the teaching process is sufficiently complex to make it virtually

impossible to master a comfortable teaching style without first mastering some of the basic component parts of teaching. Further, however artificial the situation may seem, the benefit of having a low-risk, non-threatening environment outweights the artificiality of the simulated conditions. Time, money and potential exposure of students to poor teaching are purposefully avoided in this context. The trainee is not practicing during valuable class time, nor is he responsible for increasing the knowledge of the micropupils; he is only responsible for increasing his own knowledge about teaching.

A second limitation in microteaching is the lack of opportunity to integrate all the teaching skills together into a coherent whole. Microteaching is not designed to simulate the entire teaching experience. Problems encountered in the regular classroom can be addressed in a microteaching setting and new ideas can be tried out. However, as a place for experimentation in component teaching techniques, it is not a substitute for the actual teaching experience, it is an augmentation.

Microteaching Phases

The preceeding section introduced the component phases of microteaching: modeling, practice and feedback. This section is designed to provide the reader with a complete description of these phases.

Modeling

Research has shown that the modeling phase of microteaching is critically important to the overal effectiveness of training (Orme, 1967), (Berliner, 1967), (McDonald, 1967). The purpose of modeling is to show the trainee what the skill is and how it is used before he actually begins to practice and learn it. Hence, the underlying process is imitation by the trainee to help learn the skill in the practice phase.

Modeling can occur in a number of different ways. The supervisor can lecture the trainee on the skill or provide reading materials for the trainee that describe the behaviors he is to learn. Or, and more effectively, the trainee can be shown a video tape of a teacher actually performing the skill. Another method is to have the supervisor model the skill for the trainee in front of a live class. Of these methods, using the video tape model, is the most reliable technique because it provides a controlled presentation that focuses on the skill in question. Whenever possible, the AITSP will incorporate these model tapes and augment them with the other techniques.

The AITSP microteaching sessions will be characterized by explaining the skill to the trainee a number of times. This will be followed by two or three models. Throughout the sessions the supervisor will model the skill for the trainee. The modeling will be continual throughout the microteaching session to provide the trainee the opportunity to repeat viewing models as he continues with his

subsequent practice. The purpose of this technique is to provide ample practice for the skill to become a permanent part of the trainee's teaching repertoire.

Practice

Previous research has shown that four to five practice repetitions in microteaching are generally sufficient to learn new skills (Orme, 1967), (Stayrook, 1971). Each of the practice phases lasts approximately five to ten minutes and after each the trainee discusses his teaching with the supervisor. This cycle of feedback and practice continues until the supervisor and trainee decide together that the sessions have served their purpose.

To provide complete feedback and the opportunity to observe behaviors unnoticed by the supervisor and inadvertent to the trainee, the practice phase is video taped. The video taped lessons are reshown immediately, and critiqued by the supervisor in a discussion with the trainee and possibly with the micropupils.

It should be mentioned that the most effective practice occurs when the teacher goes into his regular classroom. After all, this is the reality of teaching, the actual setting. Therefore, arrangements can be made whereby interested teachers can have their classes video taped in the regular classroom. Further arrangements can also be made for them to receive feedback and critiques from a supervisor.

Feedback

After the teacher has seen the model and practiced the skill for the first time, he will want to discuss this with a supervisor. The supervisor in the feedback phase acts as a consultant to the trainee; giving him suggestions for using the skill, pointing out times when the skill was used properly, and helping him plan for his next lesson. The supervisor will also be able to help the trainee build confidence with his own teaching style. During the feedback phase the supervisor and trainee together will attempt to choose those skills to practice that seem to be most appropriate to the teaching style, teaching facility and personality of the trainee. This emphasis on designing microteaching sessions that are personal to the trainee enables supervisors to respond to specific problems of individual learners as they occur. Hence, the supervisor's job is not to make the trainee use the skill and change his teaching style, but it is to give the trainee the opportunity to experiment on how the skill fits into a comfortable way of teaching for himself.

These phases of microteaching have been shown to be effective in a variety of contexts (Orme, 1967), (Hamilton, 1972), (Perusse, 1972). However, since the trainee population of the AITSP is unique, the sessions will be continually evaluated to permit changes as they are necessary to improve the quality and effectiveness of the teaching practicum.

Different Approaches to Microteaching

The AITSP teaching practicum will utilize three basic approaches to microteaching. The approach chosen in each case will be a function of the particular skill to be taught. All of the approaches will incorporate the three phases described earlier with some differences between the approaches. The following discussions are designed to provide the basic information necessary to make decisions about the approach most appropriate for given purposes.

Stanford Approach

The earliest microteaching development was by Allen (1963) at Stanford University. After experimenting with a variety of techniques, the following procedures were incorporated in this approach:

1. Teach for 5 minutes
2. Read written directions
3. View model tape
4. Teach for 5 minutes
5. Receive feedback from supervisor
6. Teach for 5 minutes
7. Receive feedback from supervisor
8. Teach for 5 minutes

This approach was found to be very successful for gathering research data. However, with a few minor changes this approach is effective for training purposes as well. An addition of a modeling phase to each one of the feedbacks and a final overall feedback after

the last teaching session changes the procedures to look as follows:

1. Teach for 5 minutes
2. Read written directions
3. View model tape
4. Teach for 5 minutes
5. Receive feedback from supervisor
6. View another model tape
7. Teach for 5 minutes
8. Receive feedback from supervisor
9. View another model tape
10. Teach for 5 minutes
11. Receive overall feedback from supervisor

These modifications lead to an approach that is particularly useful for those teaching skills that involve a teacher in front of a group of students (as opposed to a teacher working informally with a small group of students). In the Stanford Approach it is necessary for the 4 to 8 micropupils to act as they would normally act in a regular classroom. The trainee in this case is asked to prepare a microteaching lesson and teach that lesson to the micropupils.

Affective-Emotional Approach

This approach is similar to the Stanford Approach in structure. The difference is in the role played by the teacher. In the affective-emotional context the teacher acts as another person in the group. All of the individuals in the microteaching lesson work simultaneously

on skills of interpersonal relations. A key element in this approach is awareness of the other members of the group. The sessions are oriented toward learning how other people respond to you emotionally. The underlying point of view is that good teachers need to be able to relate to students (and others) as persons. This approach emphasizes learning how to develop those skills. Feedback sessions are held with the whole group with the supervisor to maximize the flow of ideas. Video tape playbacks of the sessions are also used to isolate particular skills to be worked on.

Role-Playing Approach

As with the affective-emotional approach, the role-playing approach uses the same basic structure as the Stanford Approach. In this approach the difference is in the role of the pupils. In the role-playing microteaching approach the pupils act as cohorts and are given explicit directions on how to act during the microteaching lesson. Since it would be poor to have pupils who knew the content area of the microteaching lesson, the students may be instructed to ask naive questions. Or, the students may be asked to respond only to good questions (by some specified criteria) to encourage the trainee to work harder at learning to ask good questions.

It can be seen the three approaches to microteaching are not completely different from each other in terms of structure. Small groups, video tape, modeling, practice and feedback are utilized in all cases. It is on the basis of the particular needs of the trainees

and the skill to be practiced that the choice of a particular approach should be made.

Teaching Skills

It was mentioned in the first part of this paper that microteaching is most effective when the trainee has a pre-defined skill to be learned. A number of useful teaching skills have been successfully taught in microteaching settings. This chapter will present a list of these skills with a brief description of each one. Each of the names of the skills will be followed by the name of the person to whom credit is due for development of the skill for microteaching, and each skill has associated with it a particular microteaching approach that the authors feel is most appropriate to be used with it.

While you read this list of skills, you should have in mind the objectives of your teaching and the methods you will apply to reach those goals. You may also wish to pick out skills which you think would improve your effectiveness and enhance your level of comfort in the classroom. Further, you may wish to choose your own approach/skill combination to try out in a microteaching session.

Reinforcement (M.E.J. Orme) (Stanford Approach)

In order to increase desired behavior in the classroom, the instructor will want to praise the desirable behaviors. Hence, the teacher practices using a variety of praise techniques: smiles, nods, etc., (non-verbal) or verbal comments such as "good idea," "well

done," etc. The teacher learns the value of reinforcement, how it works and practices various ways of reinforcing particular behaviors. The session attempts to capitalize on the use of reinforces that are appropriate for the trainee.

Stimulus Variation (M.E.J. Orme) (Stimulus Approach)

Stimulus variation describes the process of moving about the classroom and gesturing in order to increase pupil attention. Besides movement, position, and gestures, the trainee works on situations where novelty, complexity, and intellectual tension can produce increased attention on the part of the pupils.

Lecturing (Allen and Ryan, 1963) (Stanford Approach)

This particular skill involves the component skills of lecturing. Teachers should have clear voices, use the chalkboard and audio-visual materials properly, and have a style of presentation that is not confusing to the students. Logical presentation of topics and ideas is stressed and stance and position in the classroom are also practiced.

Inquiry Training (J. Richard Suchman) (Stanford Approach)

Learning by inquiry is the process allowing the student to discover the concepts and principles of the content area on his own. Teachers are trained in constructing an environment in which this can occur. Particular types of questioning skills are used to cause students to think critically and inquiringly about the content area. Some non-verbal skills of communication are also taught.

Interpersonal Communication Skills (T. Gregory and M. Englander)
(Affective-Emotional Approach)

In order for a teacher to develop good rapport with his students he needs to be able to communicate with them on a level that shows honest interest in their learning. This skill is designed to let the teacher practice the communication of feelings with students and works against the notion of ivory tower instructors out of touch with reality. Some of the components involved are: emphathizing, being genuine, being concrete, expressing feelings, and paraphrasing.

Some other skills which could be taught in microteaching that are not unique to a particular approach are: divergent questioning, set induction, use of silence and non-verbal cues, use of examples, use of planned repetition and completeness in communication. These are mentioned briefly in order to demonstrate microteaching as a vehicle that is useful for a wide variety of teaching skills.

Summary

This booklet has provided a brief overview of microteaching. Given the goals of your teaching and the methods by which you plan to achieve these goals, a particular set of skills will be useful to you. Some of these skills will obviously be more worthwhile to you than others. At this point it is up to you to determine which of the skills you would like to learn.

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